

# Lenin and Britain

HIS MESSAGE TO THE  
BRITISH WORKERS



*Collected  
Articles  
Compiled  
by*

**A. LEPESHINSKY**

*PRICE ONE SHILLING*

London  
**COMMUNIST PARTY of Gt. BRITAIN**  
16 King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2



Lenin, V.I.  
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## FOREWORD

**A**L, the workers of the world, and we in Britain amongst them know Lenin as the leader of the Russian workers and peasants in their fight against world capitalism from 1917 onwards. We know him as the chief architect who supervised the building of the Soviet Republic. We know him as the founder and leader for four years of the Communist International. Some of us know the active part he played in the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The capitalists of the whole world realised this long before the workers. They saw in him, and rightly, the embodiment and inspiration of the struggle against their domination all over the world. In particular, they saw his deadly and inspiring hatred of imperialism, with its double atrocity of colonial exploitation and war. For the exploiters, the sweaters, the ruling class of every capitalist country, Lenin was the most dangerous and most detested leader of the workers and peasants. But in their insensate fury the capitalist class over-reached themselves. The very work which they distorted and misrepresented in their press and their propaganda endeared him and his teachings to millions upon millions of workers and peasants who would otherwise never have known him. Millions upon millions of the oppressed in every country know to-day that Lenin stood for their emancipation and showed them how to obtain it.

But few amongst us know his twenty years' fight before the revolution, and without which the



Revolution would have been impossible. Few amongst us have a clear picture of Lenin's twenty years' savage denunciation of imperialism, hatred of capitalist exploitation, loathing and unsparing exposure of opportunism in the ranks of Labour. Very few of us have any conception of the indomitable persistence and consistency with which he hammered out the policy and tactics of the workers' revolutionary party, bit by bit, and how man by man he gathered around him all that was determined, devoted and, above all, clearheaded in the ranks of the working class.

Yet this part of his work was no less important than that which came later: in a sense, more so, because it laid the foundations. Even in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, seven years after the Revolution, the class-conscious workers are learning how to fight and beat world capitalism from what Lenin wrote. But for us British workers, for our Communist Party, entering today into a period of reaction as black as any which the Bolsheviks had to pass through in their long struggle, the twenty odd volumes of Lenin's writings are a treasure house of political education and practical guidance.

Most of all because of Lenin's way of tackling his problems, Leninism, which we call "Marxism in the era of imperialism and world revolution," preserves the characteristic *feature* of Marxism in being, not a dogma, or a bible, but a lesson and a key. Lenin's way of fighting the Russian capitalists, without hesitation, compromise or intermission, meeting them in every field of their activity, teaches us how to beat them in Britain. Lenin's way of telling the truth to the

workers, without sparing their prejudices or their mistakes, never pandering to passing illusions, however popular they might be, teaches us how to win their support for the Communist Party.

Lenin's gigantic service to the industrial proletariat of Russia, in pointing out to them that they had a mighty ally in the exploited peasantry, is equally of paramount importance to the British workers, whose ally in their life-and-death struggle against British Big Business is to be found, not in the narrow confines of the British Isles, but in the enslaved millions who starve and suffer in the British Colonies. Lenin's endless battles against the opportunists, the liquidators, the apostles of coalition with the capitalists, is one of the biggest object lessons from which we can learn *and must learn* in Britain to-day.

In conjunction with the Communist International and pending the publication of a fully representative selection of Lenin's works in several volumes, the Party is beginning to issue a series of booklets, under the general title of "The Lenin Library." Each will illustrate what Lenin thought and wrote on one of the most important problems facing the British workers to-day. As a commencement, the present booklet contains some of the most striking passages which occur in Lenin's works on the subject of the British Empire, and of the struggle of British labour. It will well repay the systematic study of every Communist, particularly of our factory groups. But it has a wider message. Groups of Party sympathisers, Labour College classes, active workers in the Labour Party and the trade unions—all will find that a series of weekly meetings to study and dis-



cuss these pages will enable them to put their finger on the strong and the weak points of our British Labour movement, as they have never done before.

In particular, we shall find in this booklet the fundamental ideas of Lenin on the subject of the part to be played by the revolutionary Party of the workers in the revolution. Perhaps fragmentarily we can only get a fuller picture when we study Lenin's work more fully. But still sharply and definitely we hear Lenin telling us that the question of organising and developing a Party is not a mere question of *organisation* and of *outward forms*: it is a *political* question, for, without the organisation, the instinctive revolt of the workers remains blind, formless, aimless and easily broken.

And that is worth while—as the 130 millions of free workers and peasants, building their own Labour Commonwealth at last, brick by brick, within the Soviet frontiers, will not fail to confirm. For it will help us to smash capitalism, as they have done.

C. M. ROEBUCK.

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## SECTION I.

# IMPERIALISM

## INTRODUCTION.

THE British workers have only lately begun to realise that for well-nigh a hundred years the British capitalist class has made them its unconscious accomplices in enslaving and exploiting the workers of the colonies. Recent events in Egypt, Sudan, India, Jamaica and elsewhere have done more to show this up in practice than many years of Socialist propaganda could have done.

As a matter of fact, there was very little propaganda. As Lenin describes in such a masterly way, capitalism paid its price—in the shape of better conditions for the British workers as a whole, and for certain sections in particular—and got full value for its money. The leaders of Labour, whether bearing a Socialist label or not, were almost unanimous in their conspiracy of silence. The most that was granted to the unfortunate sweated millions in the colonies was a few pious expressions of sentimental sympathy.

Lenin was made of different stuff, and he told the workers years ago where their real interests lay. Above all, he showed them that British capitalism could not exist to-day except as an imperialist force, and that consequently it is secure



in the saddle so long as it can go on squeezing profits out of colonial workers and peasants. Still more, so long as the British workers do not go forward with outstretched hand, to meet the Indian, Egyptian, black, brown and yellow workers as brothers and equals, British capitalism will always be able to foster race hatred amongst the colonial workers, and, if necessary, arm them against British Labour.

This places a great responsibility on the British workers. When they raise the colonial workers in revolt against British imperialism, they are striking the deadliest blow to the financiers, manufacturers and merchants whom they have to fight at home. In spite of all specious arguments—workers can easily supply and answer them for themselves—an essential preliminary for the emancipation of Labour in Britain is “independence for the colonies, and dissolution of the British Empire!”

This is Lenin's message. The British working class, shaken and weakened by the War and the Peace, is ready to hear it to-day. British capitalism is no longer able to guarantee our workers the position of a Labour aristocracy. Its own robber policy of Imperialism, clashing with that of other capitalist countries, led to the war and the destruction of its markets. The colonies are rising in revolt, even their native capitalists struggling for emancipation from the dead hand of British monopoly. Our solidarity is, of course, with the workers and peasants of India and Egypt, not with the Indian and Egyptian capitalists and middle classes, who seek to exploit them more freely than they can to-day. But here we must make no mistake.

If we want to break British capitalism, we must not reject the aid even of the colonial capitalists, if they are willing to fight. Only when a real Workers' Government is established in Britain, shall we be able to repay our debt to the colonial workers and peasants in full.





## 1. MEANING OF IMPERIALISM.

**T**HE period which marked the enormous increase in Great Britain's colonial conquests occurred between the years 1860 and 1880, and especially also during the last twenty years of the Nineteenth Century. For France and Germany it was during these last twenty years.

Pre-monopolist capitalism (capitalism in which free competition prevailed) reached the limit of its development between the years 1860 and 1870, and we see that it is precisely subsequent to this period that the "boom" in Colonial conquests takes place and the fight for the territorial partition of the world becomes extraordinarily acute. Undoubtedly, therefore, the transition of capitalism to the stage of monopolist and finance capitalism is linked up with the intensification of the struggle for the partition of the world.

In his book on Imperialism, Hobson described the period between 1884 and 1900 as the period of the great "expansion" of the principal European States. According to his calculation, during this period Great Britain acquired 3,700,000 square miles of territory with a population of 57,000,000; France acquired 3,000,000 square miles of territory with a population of 36,000,000; Germany 1,000,000 square miles with a population of 1,470,000; Belgium 900,000 square miles with a population of 30,000,000; Portugal 800,000 square miles with a population of 9,000,000. The race for colonies at the end of the 19th century, particularly from 1880, is a fact generally recognised in the history of the diplomacy and foreign policy of all capitalist States.

Between the years 1840-1860, the most flourishing period for free competition in Great Britain, leading statesmen there opposed a colonial policy and regarded the liberation of the colonies, their complete separation from Great Britain, as inevitable and useful. In his article on "Modern British Imperialism," published in 1898, M. Beer points out that in 1852 a statesman like Disraeli who, generally speaking, was imperialistically inclined, declared: "Colonies are millstones round our necks." But at the close of the 19th century, Cecil Rhodes and Joseph Chamberlain were the heroes of the day, men who frankly preached imperialism and with the utmost cynicism advocated the application of imperialist policy.

## THE IMPERIALIST CREED.

It is not without interest to observe that these British capitalist statesmen clearly saw at that time the connection between the so-called purely economic and socio-political roots of modern imperialism. Chamberlain advocated imperialism as a "truly wise and economic policy," and pointed particularly to the competition which Great Britain was now meeting in the world market from Germany, America and Belgium. Salvation lies in monopoly, said the capitalists, and they set about forming cartels, syndicates and trusts. Salvation lies in monopoly, echoed the political leaders of the bourgeoisie, and hastened to seize the as yet unpartitioned parts of the world.

Cecil Rhodes, in a conversation with his intimate friend, the journalist Stead, in 1895 said the following with regard to his imperialist ideas:



"Yesterday I visited the East End of London, and attended a meeting of the unemployed. After hearing the wild speeches delivered there which were nothing but one howl for bread! bread! I went home and pondered over what I had seen, and I became more convinced than ever before of the importance of imperialism. My one idea is the solution of the social question: that is, to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a murderous civil war. We must, by means of our colonial policy obtain possession of new lands upon which to settle our surplus population, acquire new markets for our goods produced in the factories and in the mines of the Empire. I have always said that this is a bread and butter question. If you wish to avoid civil war you must become imperialist."

Thus spoke the millionaire, financial king and principal culprit for the Boer War in 1895.

Lenin: "Imperialism, the Last Stage of Capitalism," Collected Works, Volume XIII., page 237 (Russian Edition).



## 2. THE COLONIAL POLICY OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM.

### IRELAND.

**T**HE events now taking place (beginning of 1914) in the British Parliament in connection with the Irish Home Rule Bill are extremely interesting both from the standpoint of class relations and that of the standpoint of national and agrarian questions.

For centuries England has enslaved Ireland and has reduced the Irish peasants to a state in which they are practically dying from starvation, it has driven the Irish peasants from the land, and has compelled hundreds of thousands and millions to leave their native land and emigrate to America. In the beginning of the 19th century, Ireland had a population of 5,500,000. Now the population only numbers about 4,300,000. Ireland has become depopulated. During the 19th century, more than 5,000,000 Irishmen emigrated to America, and there are now more Irishmen in the United States than there are in Ireland.

The unparalleled misfortunes and sufferings of the Irish peasants serve as a most instructive illustration of the extreme to which the landlords and the Liberal capitalists of the "dominant nation" will go. England built up its "brilliant" economic development, its industry and trade "flourished" to a considerable degree as a result of exploits similar to those committed against the



Irish peasantry, and which recall the conduct of the Russian feudal master Saltichik.\*

England "flourished" while Ireland declined and remained an undeveloped semi-barbarous, purely agrarian, country, a land of pauper tenant farmers. But, however much "enlightened and liberal" British bourgeoisie might have desired to perpetuate the enslavement and impoverishment of Ireland, nevertheless reform was inevitable as the revolutionary outbursts of the struggle of the Irish people for land and freedom became more and more threatening. In 1861, the Irish revolutionary Fenian Society was formed. The Irishmen who emigrated to America supported the Fenians in every possible way.

In 1868, with the accession to power of Gladstone, that hero of the Liberal bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois mediocrity, the period of Irish reforms commences, a period which has dragged on most successfully up to the present day, *i.e.*, a little less than half a century. Oh, yes! The wise Liberal bourgeois statesmen know very well how to hasten slowly with their reforms.

At that time Karl Marx had already lived in London for fifteen years, and he followed the struggle of the Irish people with the greatest sympathy. Writing to Frederick Engels on the 30th of November, 1869, he said:

THE TASKS OF THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS IN CONNECTION WITH THE IRISH QUESTION.

"... the question is what should we advise the British workers to do? In my opinion they should

\* Saltichik was a Russian feudal landlord whose name became synonymous with cruelty.

include in their programme the abolition of the Union with Ireland. The separation of Ireland is the only possible form of Irish liberation which must be included in the programme of the British Labour Party." Marx further pointed out that the Irish people needed Home Rule and to be independent from England, an agrarian revolution and a customs tariff against England.

This was the programme which Marx suggested to the British workers as a means for obtaining the freedom of Ireland, of hastening the social development and emancipation of the British workers; for the British workers would never become free themselves so long as they assisted (or even permitted) another nation to remain in slavery.

Unfortunately, the British workers, in view of a number of special historical causes in the last third of the 19th century, were dependent upon the Liberals, and imbued with the spirit of Lib.-Lab. politics. They found themselves not at the head of the peoples and classes fighting for freedom, but at the tail of the contemptible lackeys of the moneybags, the English Liberals.

#### THE BRITISH BOURGEOISIE LIBERATES IRELAND.

And so the Liberals have dragged out the liberation of Ireland for half a century, and without having granted it even yet. Only in the 20th century did the Irish peasant become converted from a tenant farmer into a free landowner. But the Liberals compelled him to buy out the land at a fair price. Millions and millions must be paid in tribute and for many years to come to the English landlords to reward them for having plan-



dered the Irish peasants and reduced them to a state of famine. The British Liberal bourgeoisie have compelled the Irish peasants to express their gratitude to the landlords for this in ready money.

At the present moment a Home Rule Bill is being debated in Parliament. But in Ireland, there is the northern province called Ulster. This county is populated chiefly by the descendants of English protestants, whereas the rest of Ireland is catholic. Well, the English Conservatives and landlord black hundreds\* led by Carson, have raised a howl against granting Home Rule to Ireland. This, they say, means placing the Ulster people in subjection to an alien race and an alien faith. Lord Carson threatened to revolt and organise armed gangs of Black Hundreds.

Of course, the threat was an empty one. There can be no question of the revolt of a handful of hooligans, nor can there be any talk of the oppression of Protestants by an Irish parliament (whose powers would be determined by British laws).

All that this noise implies is that the landlord black hundreds are trying to intimidate the Liberals.

And the Liberals are scared, they are grovelling at the feet of the Black Hundreds, making concessions to them by suggesting a referendum for Ulster, and postponing the introduction of the reform for Ulster for six years.

This bargaining between the Liberals and Black Hundreds continues. Meanwhile the reform

\* Black Hundreds—a counter-revolutionary organisation set up by the Russian Government in 1905.

is hung up. The Irish waited a half-a-century, they will wait a little more. One can't "offend" the landlords.

Of course, if the Liberals appealed to the people of England, to the proletariat, Carson's Black Hundred gangs would melt away and disappear. The peaceful and complete freedom of Ireland would be secured.

But can we picture the Liberal bourgeoisie turning to the proletariat for help against the landlords? Why, the British Liberals are also the lackeys of the moneybags capable only of grovelling at the feet of the Carsons.

"Put Pravdi" (The Path of Truth), No. 34, March 12th, 1914.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. 13, p. 403 (Russian Edition). Article on "The British Liberals and Ireland."





### 3: THE WORKING CLASS IN AN IMPERIAL COUNTRY AND ITS TASKS.

**I**MPERIALISM has a tendency to create privileged grades even among the workers and split these off from the mass of the proletariat as a whole.

#### IMPERIALISM CREATES A "BOURGEOIS" WORKING CLASS.

It should be observed that in England the tendency of imperialism to split up the workers, intensify opportunism among them, and to cause a temporary rot in the Labour movement, revealed itself much earlier than the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century; for from the middle of the 19th century, British imperialism was marked by important distinctive features, namely, enormous colonial possessions and a monopolist possession in the world market. In a letter written on 11th of August, 1881, Engels speaks of the worst British trade unions which "permit themselves to be led by men who are bought by the bourgeoisie or are at least in their pay." And in his letter to Kautsky of September 12th, 1882, Engels wrote: "You ask me what the British workers think about colonial politics. The same as they think about politics generally. There is no Labour Party here. There are only Conservatives and Liberal-Radicals, and the workers quite calmly share with them the colonial monopoly of Britain and its monopoly in the world market." (The same idea was expounded by Engels in his introduction to the second edition of his "Position of the Working Class in England," 1892.)

Here cause and effect are clearly seen. Causes: (1) That the country exploits the whole world; (2) the country occupies a monopolist position in the world market; (3) its colonial monopoly.

Effects: (1) Sections of the British proletariat become bourgeois; (2) a section of the working class permits itself to be led by men bought by the bourgeoisie or who are at least in their pay. At the beginning of the 20th century, imperialism has completed the process of partitioning the world among a handful of States, each of which now exploits (extracts super-profit) a slightly smaller portion of the world than England did in 1858. Each one occupies a monopolist position on the world market by means of trusts, cartels, finance capital, the relations between debtor and creditor.

The distinctive feature of the present situation is the prevalence of economic and political conditions which cannot but increase the incompatibility between opportunism\* with the general and fundamental interest of the Labour movement; from an embryonic state, imperialism has grown into a dominant system; capitalist monopoly occupies first place in national economics and politics; the partition of the world has been carried on to the bitter end. On the other hand, in place of the undivided monopoly of Great Britain, we witness a struggle to share in this monopoly on the part of a few imperialist States, a struggle which is characteristic of the whole of the beginning of the 20th

\* Opportunism—the policy (marked by absence of principles) of adaptation to circumstances in the Labour movement which leads to the repudiation of revolution and to compromise with the bourgeoisie.



century. Opportunism can no longer dominate the position in the Labour movement of a single country for a number of decades as was the case in England in the second half of the 19th century. But it has completely ripened and has even become putrified in a number of countries where it has merged with bourgeois politics in the form of social chauvinism.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xiii., p. 320 (Russian Edition). Article "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement."

### THE LABOUR ARISTOCRACY.

The bourgeoisie of the "great" imperialist States are able to bribe the upper strata of the workers in their respective countries, and to sacrifice a hundred million francs or so per year for this purpose; for in all probability their super-profits amount to nearly a billion. The question as to how this dole is shared among the Labour ministers, the "Labour members" (you will remember Engels' excellent analysis of this conception) among the working class members of war industry committees, the Labour officials, the workers organised in narrow craft unions, office clerks, etc., etc., is only of secondary importance.

In the period of 1848-1868, and later, to some extent, England enjoyed complete monopoly. For that reason opportunism was able to last for decades. There were no other countries with rich colonies and an industrial monopoly.

The last third of the 19th century marked the transition period to a new imperialist epoch. The finance capitalists not merely of one great Power,

but of many, enjoyed a monopoly. British monopoly remained undisputed for decades, but the monopoly of modern finance capital is hotly disputed: the period of imperialist wars has begun. Thus, formerly, the working class of a single country could be bribed and corrupted for decades. Now in all probability this is impossible. But on the other hand every imperialist "great" power can and does bribe a smaller (than in England of 1848-1868) section of the "Labour aristocracy." In the first case, a "bourgeois Labour Party," to use the remarkably profound expression of Engels, could be formed only in one country, because only one country enjoyed a complete monopoly; but she enjoyed it for a long period. Now "bourgeois Labour parties" are inevitable and typical for all imperialist countries; but in view of the desperate fight which is being waged for the division of the spoils, it is hardly likely that such a party can be successful in a number of countries for any length of time; for trusts, the financial oligarchy, high prices, etc., etc., which renders it possible to bribe a handful of the upper strata, more and more oppress, crush and impose suffering upon the mass of the proletariat and semi-proletariat.

### PROLETARIAN AND BOURGEOIS POLITICS.

On the one hand we have the tendency of the bourgeoisie and opportunists to convert a handful of the richest and privileged nations into "eternal" parasites on the body of the rest of humanity, "to rest on the laurels" of the exploitation of negroes, Indians, etc., and to keep them in subjection with the aid of modern imperialism, excellently equipped with the latest technique of destruction.



On the other hand, there is the tendency of the masses oppressed more severely than before, and bearing all the sufferings of imperialist wars, to throw off this yoke and overthrow the bourgeoisie. The history of the Labour movement will undoubtedly unfold in the struggle between these two tendencies, for the first tendency is not accidental, but has an economic "foundation." The bourgeoisie has already given birth to, reared and secured for itself the "bourgeois Labour parties" the social patriots of all countries. What is important is that the economic adherence of a section of the working class to the bourgeoisie has matured and has been effected. This economic fact, this reshuffling in the relations between classes will find a political form for itself without any special "difficulty."

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. 15, p. 48 (Russian Edition). Article, "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement."

### THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY IN THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL.

The meeting of the International Socialist Bureau took place on October 12th, 1908. The first question on the agenda—the admission of the British Labour Party to membership of the Bureau—took up the whole of the morning session. According to the statutes of the International, membership is open firstly to Socialist parties recognising the class struggle, and secondly to Labour organisations accepting the point of view of the class struggle (*i.e.*, trade unions). The Labour Party, recently formed in the House of Commons, does not openly call itself a Socialist

Party, nor does it definitely admit the principle of the class struggle (which, it should be said in parenthesis, the British Socialist Democrats demand it should). But, of course, the Labour Party was admitted to the International in general, and to the Stuttgart Congress in particular, because it is in fact an organisation of a mixed type, standing midway between the two types defined in Clauses I. and II. of the Statutes of the International, it is the political representative of the British trade unions. Nevertheless, the question of its admission was raised, and indeed raised by itself in the person of the Independent Labour Party, which is one of the two sub-sections of the British Section of the International. The other sub-section is the Socialist Democratic Federation.

The Independent Labour Party demanded the *direct* recognition of the fact that the Labour Party was a member of the International. Its delegate, Bruce Glasier, emphasised the great significance of the fact that the Party represented in Parliament hundred of thousands of organised workers who were coming over more and more definitely to Socialism. Of principles, formulae, and catechism, it was extremely negligent. Kautsky, in reply objected to this careless attitude towards principles and the final aims of Socialism, but wholeheartedly supported the admission of the Labour Party on the grounds that it was in practice conducting the class struggle. Kautsky proposed the following resolution:

"Bearing in mind the former decisions of International Congresses, admitting to membership all organisations which adopt the basis of the proletarian class struggle, and recognise the political



struggle, the International Bureau declares that the British Labour Party shall be admitted to the International Socialist congresses since, while not expressly recognising the proletarian class struggle, nevertheless in practice conducts the struggle, and by its very organisation, which is independent of the bourgeois parties, bases itself on the class struggle."

Kautsky was supported by the Austrians and the French (Vaillant) and, as the voting showed, by the majority of the small nations. He was opposed first of all by Hyndman, representative of the British Social Democratic Federation, who demanded that the position be left as it was until the Labour Party expressly recognised the principle of the class struggle and Socialism; then followed Rouselle (a Guesdeist, formerly the second French woman delegate), Rubanovitch, of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, and Avramov, delegate from the revolutionary faction of the Bulgarian Socialists.

I rose to speak in favour of the first part of Kautsky's resolution. I said that we could not refuse to admit the Labour Party, *i.e.*, the Parliamentary representatives of the trade unions, once the Congresses had already admitted the trade unions in general, even such as had entrusted their representation to bourgeois parliamentarians. But, I asserted, the second part of the Kautsky Resolution was wrong, for *in practice* the Labour Party was not really independent of the Liberals and was not conducting an altogether independent class policy. I therefore proposed in amendment to alter the end of the resolution beginning from the word "since" to run as follows:

"since it (the Labour Party) represents the first steps on the part of the real proletarian organisations of England towards a conscious class policy and towards a *Socialist* Labour Party."

I sent this amendment into the Bureau. Kautsky refused to accept my amendment, declaring it in his next speech that the International Bureau could not adopt decisions on the basis of "expectations." But the main conflict was conducted between the supporters and opponents of Kautsky's resolution as a whole. When it came to the voting, Adler proposed that it should be divided into two parts, both were adopted by the International Bureau, the first part against a vote of 3, with one abstention, and the second part against a vote of 4, also with one abstention. Kautsky's resolution was, therefore, adopted by the Bureau. The abstainer in both cases was Rubanovitch. I should add that Victor Adler, who spoke after me and before Kautsky, made his second speech, opposed me on the following grounds (I quote from the report of the Belgian Socialist paper *Le Peuple*, which gave the most detailed and the most exact account of the proceedings): "Lenin's proposal is very alluring (Adler said *verlockene*) but it should not cause us to forget the fact that the Labour Party has remained outside the bourgeois party. It is not our business to judge how it did this. Let us recognise the fact of the progress."

Such was the discussion at the International Bureau on this question. I will here dwell on the discussion in greater detail in order to explain my position to the readers of *The Proletarian*. The arguments of Victor Adler and Karl Kautsky failed



to convince me, and I still think them incorrect. When in his resolution he stated that the Labour Party "does not expressly recognise the proletarian class struggle," Kautsky was undoubtedly giving expression to some "expectations" and some "judgment" as to what is the policy of the Labour Party now and what it should be. But Kautsky expressed this indirectly, and the result was an affirmation which, firstly, was incorrect in itself, and, secondly, permitted a distortion of Kautsky's *idea*. That the Labour Party in England, by dissociating itself in *Parliament* (not at the elections! not in its policy! not in its propaganda and agitation!) from the bourgeois parties, was thereby making the first step on behalf of the proletarian mass organisations towards Socialism and the class policy, is beyond dispute. This is not "an expectation," but a fact which obliges us to admit the Labour Party into the International, since we have already admitted the trade unions. Finally, such a formulation would induce hundreds of thousands of British workers, who undoubtedly respect the decisions of the International, but who are not yet quite Socialists, to reflect once more why it is considered that they have made only the *first* step, and what the *next* steps in the same direction should be. In my formulation of the resolution there is not a shadow of a claim that the International should undertake to decide the concrete and detailed problems of a national Labour movement, and determine when and what further steps are necessary. That further steps in general are necessary by a party which does not expressly and clearly recognise the principle of the class struggle we cannot but admit. It was admitted by Kautsky in his resolution, but indirectly and not directly.

The result was as though the International guaranteed that the Labour Party was in *practice* conducting a consistent class struggle, and as though it were enough for Labour organisations to form themselves in Parliament into a separate Labour group in order to become independent of the bourgeoisie in all their actions.

There is no doubt that the position of Hyndman, Rouselle, Rubanovitch and Avramov on this question was still more incorrect (which Rubanovitch did not improve, but rather still more confused by abstaining from voting on both sections of the resolution). When Avramov claimed that to admit the Labour Party would be to encourage opportunism, he was absolutely wrong. We have only to remember the letters of Engels to Zorga. For many years, Engels insisted that the British social-democrats, headed by Hyndman, were guilty of error, and of sectarianism, that they were unable to get in contact with the unconscious but powerful class instinct of the trade unions, and that they transformed Marxism into a "dogma" when it should be a "guide to action." When objective conditions hinder the growth of the political consciousness and the class independence of the proletarian masses, one must know how to work patiently and consistently hand in hand with them, not sacrificing one's principles, but not refusing to work actively in the very heart of the proletarian masses. The teachings of Engels were corroborated by the progress of events, when a British trade union—which were hide-bound, aristocrats, petty and egotistical, hostile to Socialism, producing a number of direct traitors to the working class, who sold themselves to the bourgeoisie for



ministerial posts (such as John Burns)—began to make approaches to Socialism, awkwardly, inconsistently, indirectly, it is true. That Socialism among the working class in England is growing, that Socialism is *once again* becoming a mass movement in that country, that the social revolution in Great Britain is approaching—one should be blind not to see.

The International would undoubtedly have been wrong if it did not openly and directly express its complete sympathy with this great forward step of the mass working class movement of England and encourage the great revolution which was beginning in the cradle of capitalism. But it by no means follows from this that the Labour Party can already be recognised as being in practice independent of the bourgeois parties, as conducting the class struggle, and as being Socialist. An obvious error of the British Social Democratic Federation had to be corrected, but it was necessary not to give even the shadow of encouragement to *other undoubtedly no less important* errors of the British opportunists, who are leading the Independent Labour Party. That these leaders are opportunist is beyond dispute. Ramsay MacDonald, the leader of the I.L.P., even proposed at Stuttgart to amend the second clause of the statutes of the International in such a way as to demand, instead of recognition of the class struggle, the *bona fides* of Labour organisations desirous of entering the International. Kautsky himself at once detected the opportunist note in the speech of Bruce Glasier and in his speech in the Bureau, rebutted it, but unfortunately not in his resolution. Speeches in the Bureau are made for a dozen persons or so, but

the resolutions are written for millions. Before me lie the newspapers of the two sections of British Socialism containing comments on the session of the International Bureau. The organ of the Independent (hm! hm!) Labour Party, the *Labour Leader*, is jubilant and *deliberately informs* thousands of British workers that the International Socialist Bureau not merely recognised the Labour Party (that was true, and that was right), but "*also recognises the policy of the I.L.P.*" (the *Labour Leader*, Oct. 6th, 1908, p. 665). That is not true. That the Bureau did not recognise. It is an illegitimate opportunist misinterpretation of a small blunder in Kautsky's resolution. The small blunder is beginning to bear fairly big fruit. And this is abetted by bad translation. It is no unfounded saying of the Italians that translators are traitors (traduttori-tradittori). The official translation of the resolution of the Bureau in three languages has not yet been published, and it is not known when it will be published. Kautsky said that the Labour Party "bases itself on the class struggle" (the end of the resolution; in the original "sich . . . auf seinen, d. h. des Klassenkampf, Boden stellt"), which was translated by the British social-democrats as: "bases itself on international Socialism." In the translation of the British opportunists (the I.L.P.) this was rendered as "*adopts the position of international Socialism.*" Try, in the face of this, to correct these trifling mistakes in the agitation at work among the British workers

I am far from accusing Bruce Glasier of mutilating the resolution. I am certain that this could not have been his intention. And indeed, it is not



important. The important thing is that the *spirit* of the second part of Kautsky's resolution is being used in practical work among the masses. On the very same page of the *Labour Leader*, another member of the Independent Labour Party, describing his impressions of the session of the Bureau, and the Brussels meeting, complains that at the meeting insistence upon the ideal and ethical sides of Socialism—which are always so much emphasised at the meetings of the I.L.P.—was almost entirely missing, and that the barren and inspiring dogma of the class war predominated.

The organ of the British Social Democrats, *Justice*, prints the bitter words of Hyndman against the majority of the Bureau, "which threw principles overboard for convenience of weather-cocks." "I have not the slightest doubt," Hyndman writes, "that if the Bureau presented the Labour Party with a direct ultimatum, it would have immediately submitted and decided to reckon with the current of International Socialism." Another article in the same number quotes facts proving that the Independent Labour Party in fact led a part of its members under the dubious banner of a Liberal-Labour alliance, and that certain I.L.P. members supported the Liberal minister, John Burns. (*Justice*, Oct. 17th, 1908, pp. 4 and 7).

No; if Hyndman carries out the plan he talks of, namely to bring up the questions again at the International Socialist Congress at Copenhagen (to be held in 1910) then the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party must endeavour to secure a correction of Kautsky's resolution.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xi. p. 131.

### BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY.

On the economic basis indicated, the political institutions of modern capitalism, the press, parliament, trade unions, congresses, etc., created political privileges and doles for the respectable, obedient reformist and patriotic clerks and workers corresponding with the economic privileges and doles. Lucrative and easy jobs in government departments or in various parliamentary commissions, on the staffs of "respectable" legal newspapers, or on the management committees of not less "respectable" Labour unions, obediently serving the bourgeoisie, all these are the baits with which the imperialist bourgeoisie attract and reward the representatives and advocates of "bourgeois Labour parties."

The mechanics of political democracy operate in the same direction. In these days we cannot dispense with elections, we cannot do without the masses, and in this era of book-printing and parliamentarism, it is impossible to leave the masses without a widely ramified, systematically conducted, well-equipped system of flattery, lying, swindling, juggling, popular catch phrases, throwing promises right and left of favourite reforms and prosperity to the workers if they will only abandon the idea of the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. I would call this system Lloyd Georgism after one of the most advanced and clever representatives of this system in the classical land of bourgeois Labour parties," the British Cabinet Minister, Lloyd George. A first class bourgeois politician and political mountebank, a popular orator, able to make even the most revolutionary speeches before working class audi-



ences, capable of giving considerable doles to the obedient workers in the form of social reforms (insurance, etc.). Lloyd George serves the bourgeoisie exceedingly well, *i.e.*, he serves it just among the workers. He carries the influence precisely where it is most necessary and most difficult to reduce the masses to moral subordination, namely, among the proletariat.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. 13, p. 48 (Russian Edition).

Article "Imperialism and the Split in the Socialist Movement."



#### 4. THE POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF IMPERIALISM.

THE POLITICS OF THE IMPERIALIST BOURGEOISIE.

**D**OUBLE-FACED politics are a necessary "article of apparel" for every Liberal party in every civilised country. Of course, individual members of the Party very frequently select a particular side. One plays at democracy, another sobers "the extremists" and pretends to conduct "serious" bourgeois politics. But this happens in all countries, for example, the notorious Liberal mountebank in England, Lloyd George, in his public speeches poses as a revolutionary and almost a Socialist. But as a matter of fact, the politics of this Cabinet Minister are the same as those of his leader, Asquith, who concedes nothing even to the Conservatives.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. 12, p. 70 (Russian Edition).  
From article "Increasing Lack of Conformity."

#### THE ROOT OF LIBERAL-LABOUR POLITICS.

It is well known that in England there are two Labour parties, the Social-Democratic party, now known as the British Socialist Party, and another known as the Independent Labour Party. This division in the British Socialist Labour movement is not accidental, and arose a long time ago. It is caused by the peculiar history of England. Capitalism developed in England before any other country, and for a long time England was the "workshop of the world." This exclusively monopolistic position created relatively bearable living conditions in England for the Labour aristo-



cracy, i.e., for the minority of skilled and well-paid workers.

This is the origin of the petty bourgeois craft spirit of this Labour aristocracy which broke away from its class and drifted towards Liberalism and scornfully regarded Socialism as a "Utopia." The "Independent Labour Party" is precisely the party of Liberal-Labour politics. It is quite justly said that this Party is "independent" only of Socialism, and that it is very dependent on Liberalism.

In recent times, England has been completely deprived of her monopoly. The former relatively bearable conditions of life have given place to extreme impoverishment as a consequence of the high cost of living. The class struggle is becoming acute to a considerable degree, and simultaneously with this the basis of opportunism and the propaganda of Liberal-Labour politics among the workers is being undermined.

As long as these ideas were cherished by a considerable section of the workers, there could be no talk of bridging the division among the workers. Unity cannot be established by phrases and good wishes as long as the fight of social-democracy against Liberal-Labour politics continues. But now unity is really becoming possible because the protest against Liberal-Labour politics is rising within the "Independent Labour Party" itself.

"Prosveshcheniya" (Enlightenment), No. 4, April, 1913.  
A legal Bolshevik periodical published in Petrograd.

THE "DEMOCRATIC" POLITICS OF OPPORTUNISM.

Recently a parliamentary bye-election took place for the city of Leicester. This election was of extreme importance from the point of view of principle, and every Socialist interested in the important question of the relations between the proletariat and the Liberal bourgeoisie in general, and in the British Socialist movement in particular, must very carefully consider the Leicester election.

Leicester is a two-member constituency, and every voter has two votes. There are not many such constituencies in England, but where they exist, they provide an excellent opportunity for a tacit alliance between the Socialists and the Liberals. This is emphasised by the English correspondent of the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. It is precisely in such constituencies that the prominent leaders of the so-called "Independent Labour Party" (independent of Socialism, but dependent on Liberalism), J. Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, and Ramsay MacDonald are elected.

In these constituencies the Liberals who are predominant instruct their electors to give one vote for the Socialist and one vote for the Liberals, of course, if the Socialist is a "sensible," "moderate" and "independent" Socialist, and not one of those impossibilist social-democrats of whom the British Liberals and liquidators hurl the epithet of anarcho-syndicalist.

In actual practice, therefore, we have an alliance between the moderate and opportunist Socialists and the Liberals. In actual practice, the "Independents" are dependent upon the Liberals. The conduct of the "Independents" in the British



parliament is a constant confirmation of this dependence.

Well, the "independent" member for Leicester, the leader of the Party himself, Ramsay MacDonald, resigned on personal grounds.

What was to be done?

The Liberals, of course, put forward their candidate.

Leicester is a factory town with a predominantly working class population.

The local branch of the Independent Labour Party called a conference at which by 67 votes against 8, it was decided to contest the seat.

No sooner said than done. Banton, a member of the Leicester Town Council and a prominent member of the Independent Labour Party, was put forward as a candidate.

Then the Executive Committee of the I.L.P. who supplies the election funds (and in England elections cost a large amount of money) refused to endorse the candidature of Banton.

The Executive Committee of opportunists went against the local workers.

Subsequent to this the Leicester branch of the other British Socialist Party—not the opportunistic one—which is really independent of the Liberals, sent a representative to the Leicester branch of the "independent" party and suggested that the latter support the candidature of a member of the British Socialist Party named Hartley, a very popular worker in the Labour movement, formerly a member of the I.L.P., but who left it because of its opportunism.

The Leicester branch of the "Independent Labour Party" was in a very embarrassing position; with all its heart it supported Hartley, but . . . but Party discipline, the decision of its Executive Committee. The Leicesterites found a way out. They closed the meeting, and as private individuals they all supported Hartley. Next day Hartley's candidature was endorsed by a huge mass meeting of workers. Banton himself sent a telegram stating that he would vote for Hartley. The Leicester trade union branches also supported him.

The parliamentary group of the "Independents" intervened and in the local Liberal press published a protest against Hartley's candidature and against this "undermining" of MacDonald.

Of course, the elections resulted in a victory for the Liberals. They received 10,863 votes, the Conservatives 9,279 and Hartley 2,580.

Class conscious workers in various countries are frequently "tolerant" to the British Independents. This is a great mistake. The betrayal of the cause of Labour by the independents in Leicester is not accidental, but as a result of the whole opportunist policy of the "Independent Labour Party," The sympathy of all real social-democrats should be on the side of those British social democrats who fight determinedly against the Liberal corruption of the workers by the British "Independent Labour Party."

"An Exposure of British Opportunists," "Rabochaya Pravda" (Workers' Truth), No. 3, 16th July, 1913, Signed K.T.



## SECTION II.

## IMPERIALIST WAR

## INTRODUCTION.

**T**HERE are still millions of British workers who think that the last war was fought to defend Belgian neutrality, or to defend world democracy, or to crush German Militarism. This is a deadly danger to-day, when England and America are fighting one another for world markets, when Britain and France are manœuvring against one another for the economic domination of Europe, and when the victorious "Allies" of yesterday are piling up armaments to-day for the inevitable struggle over colonial markets to-morrow.

Still worse, there are tens of thousands of active workers in the British Labour movement who fail to realise that so long as imperialism exists, wars are inevitable, that wars carried on by capitalist States, whatever the pretext, serve the interests only of the capitalist class, and that the working class has only two alternatives—war against their fellow workers, or war against their "own" capitalists. Some pin their faith to the League of Nations; others think that war on Egypt is justified to defend the "independence" of the Sudan; most of them believe that street corner propaganda, or at most a peaceful general strike, can stop a war: thousands naively think that leaders who preach a truce with capitalism will honestly wage a war on war.

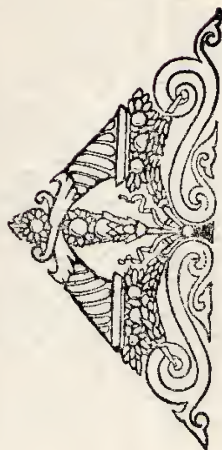
Thereby they are hiding the real nature of the capitalist class and of modern wars from the masses, and making it all the more certain that, when a new war bursts upon the workers, they will be taken absolutely by surprise and swept off their feet. And, therefore, no active worker has a right to claim that he is class conscious unless he constantly and persistently warns the workers, exposes the capitalist intrigues, and day in and day out spreads the truth (not only amongst the workers in civil life, but equally amongst the workers in uniform)—that the only way to fight war is to fight the capitalist class, and the only way to meet war is to organise revolution, not only at home, but also in the colonies whose fate is decided by war.

This was Lenin's teaching, which for twenty years was confined to the Russian workers and to a small group of supporters and followers of Lenin in the Second International as it existed before the war. Since the Russian Revolution, the Communist International which Lenin did so much to build, has grown from that small group into a mighty world organisation. In its great Anti-War Campaign, organised simultaneously in dozens of countries in the summer of 1924, it was only spreading the teachings of Lenin.

The British workers have hitherto had at their disposal only one of Lenin's works in connection with the war ("The Collapse of the Second International"), which laid bare one side of the machinery created by capitalism for leading the workers to the slaughterhouse—the treacherous leaders and renegade Socialists of the Second International. Now we have some of the most



characteristic extracts from Lenin's writings, giving us in a brief space the principal features of British imperialism in particular, and of its agents amongst the workers. Every British working man and woman should do well to look back over the last few years, and see for themselves how profound and how true was Lenin's analysis.



## THE TASKS OF THE BOURGEOISIE IN IMPERIALIST WAR.

### THE IDEAS AND AIMS OF WARS.

**I**N order to make the significance of Imperialists quite clear we quote below precise data showing the manner in which the world is divided up among the Great Powers, that is, the Powers which have had successes in plundering.

| DIVISION OF THE WORLD AMONG THE GREAT                                     |               |               |               |               | SLAVE-OWNING STATES |               |               |               |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Colonies  |               |               |               |               | Home Country        |               | Total         |               |
| Great Powers  | 1876          |               | 1914          |               | 1914                |               | Sq.<br>Kilos. | No.<br>Inhab. |
|   | Sq.<br>kilos. | No.<br>inhab. | Sq.<br>Kilos. | No.<br>Inhab. | Sq.<br>Kilos.       | No.<br>Inhab. |               |               |
|   |               |               |               | (In millions) |                     |               |               |               |
| Great Britain ...   | 22.5          | 251.9         | 33.5          | 393.5         | 0.3                 | 46.5          | 33.8          | 440.0         |
| Russia ...  | 17.0          | 15.9          | 17.4          | 33.2          | 5.4                 | 136.2         | 22.8          | 169.4         |
| France ...  | 0.9           | 6.0           | 10.6          | 55.5          | 0.5                 | 39.9          | 11.1          | 95.1          |
| Germany ...   | —             | —             | 2.9           | 12.3          | 0.5                 | 64.9          | 3.4           | 77.2          |
| Japan ...   | —             | —             | 0.3           | 19.2          | 0.4                 | 53.0          | 0.7           | 72.2          |
| United States ...   | —             | —             | 0.3           | 9.7           | 0.4                 | 97.0          | 9.7           | 106.7         |
| Six Great Powers ...  | 40.4          | 273.8         | 65.0          | 523.4         | 19.5                | 437.2         | 81.5          | 960.6         |
| Colonies belonging to smaller Powers (Belgium, Holland and other States): | 9.9           | 45.3          |               |               |                     |               | 9.9           | 45.3          |
| Three "semi-colonial" countries (Turkey, China and Persia)                |               |               |               |               |                     |               | 14.5          | 361.2         |
| Total:  |               |               |               |               |                     |               | 105.9         | 1,367.1       |
| Other states and countries:   |               |               |               |               |                     |               | 28.0          | 289.9         |
| The whole globe (not including Polar regions):                            |               |               |               |               |                     |               | 133.9         | 1,657.0       |



From this table we see that the peoples from 1789 to 1871 led other peoples in the fight for liberty after 1876, on the basis of highly-developed and "over-ripe" capitalism became the oppressors and enslavers of the majority of peoples and nations of the whole globe. From 1876 to 1914, six "Great" Powers grabbed 25,000,000 square kilometres of land, that is, an area two and a half times the size of all Europe. Six States enslave more than half a billion (523,000,000) people inhabiting the colonies. For every four inhabitants of the "Great" Powers, there are five inhabitants in "their" colonies. Every one knows that colonies are conquered by fire and sword; that colonial peoples are treated with severe cruelty and violence, that they are exploited in a thousand ways (by exporting capital, concessions, etc., cheating in trade, subjection to the "dominant" nation, etc., etc.).

#### THE BOURGEOISIE DECEIVE THE PEOPLE.

The Anglo-French bourgeoisie deceive the people by their pretence that they are fighting for the freedom of the Belgian people. As a matter of fact they are fighting in order to retain the colonies they have grabbed. The German imperialists would very quickly liberate Belgium, etc., if the British and the French would "be decent" and share their colonies with them. The irony of the situation is that the fight for the colonies is being fought out on the Continent. From the point of view of bourgeois justice and national liberty (or a nation's right to existence, Germany undoubtedly would be right as against England and France, because she did not get a "proper share"

of the colonies and her enemies oppress incomparably more nationalities than she does. But Germany is not fighting to liberate nations, but to oppress them. It is not the business of Socialists to help the young and stronger pirate (Germany) to plunder the older pirates who have become merged with plunder. Socialists should take advantage of the quarrel among the pirates to overthrow them. To do this, Socialists must first of all tell the people the truth that this is a war in the triple sense; it is a war among slaveowners for the purpose of maintaining more firmly the enslavement of the colonies by a more "just" division and later by a more "energetic" exploitation of them. Secondly, it is a war for imposing more firmly the domination of alien peoples within the "Great States" themselves, for Austria and Russia (Russia to a far greater and worse extent than Austria) maintain their existence only by this form of oppression which they intensify by war, and thirdly, for making wage slavery more enduring; for the proletariat is broken up and crushed, while the capitalists gain by a war which intensifies national prejudices and has intensified reaction which has raised its head in all countries, even in the most free and republican countries.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xiii., p. 95. Article "War Among the Big Slaveowners for Maintaining and Increasing Slavery."

#### THE BOURGEOISIE FEARS REVOLUTION.

The attitude taken towards the war by the *Economist*, the organ of the British millionaires, is very instructive. The representatives of advanced capital in the oldest and richest capital-



ist country, bitterly deplore the war and ceaselessly express their desire for peace. The Social-Democrats who, like the opportunists and Kautsky, think that the Socialist program is to advocate peace may, by reading the pages of the British *Economist*, become convinced of their error. Their program is not Socialistic, but bourgeois pacifist. To dream of peace without advocating revolutionary action, is merely an expression of the fear of war, which has nothing to do with Socialism.

Moreover, the British *Economist* stands for peace precisely because it fears revolution, for example, in its issue for February 13th, 1921, we read :

"Philanthropists express the hope that peace will bring international limitation of armaments, but those who know what forces really direct European diplomacy, are not being led away by any such utopias. The prospect opened by the war is the prospect of bloody revolutions, of severe war between capital and labour, or between the popular masses and the dominant classes in Continental Europe.

In its issue for March, 27th, 1915, we again find a desire for peace which would secure the freedom of nations, etc., promised by Sir Edward Grey. If this hope is not realised, then . . . "The war will lead to revolutionary chaos. No one can say where this chaos will commence and how it will end."

The British millionaire pacifists understand modern politics much better than the opportunists, the supporters of Kautsky, and similar Socialists who sigh for peace. The bourgeoisie in the first place knows that the phrase about a democratic

peace is an empty, stupid utopia so long as the forces that have directed diplomacy hitherto continue to do so; that is until the capitalist classes are expropriated. Secondly, the bourgeoisie quite soberly see the prospect of "bloody revolutions" and "revolutionary chaos."

In the real politics of capitalist countries, we observe three forms of sympathy for peace :

(1) Class conscious millionaires desire to expedite peace because they fear revolution. Quite soberly and correctly they declare that under capitalism a "democratic peace" (no annexations, limitations of armaments, etc. is a utopia). This petty bourgeois utopia is advocated by opportunists, supporters of Kautsky, etc.

2. Masses of the people who are not class conscious (the petty bourgeoisie, the semi-proletarians, a section of the workers, etc.), desire peace in a most indefinite form, and in this express the growing protest against the war, the growing, undefined revolutionary tendency.

3. The class conscious vanguard of the proletariat, the revolutionary social-democrats carefully watch the temper of the masses and take advantage of their increasing desire for freedom, not to support the maudlin utopia of a "democratic" peace under capitalism, not to encourage hopes in the philanthropists, in the bosses, in the bourgeoisie, but in order that the revolutionary temper may emerge from its vagueness and and become clear in order that while persistently, undeviatingly relying on the experience, on the temper of the masses, and by quoting the thousands of facts concerning pre-war politics—to prove to them the



necessity for mass revolutionary action against the bourgeoisie and against the government of their own country is the only war for democracy and Socialism.

Lenin : Collected Works : vol. xiii, p. 68. Article "Bourgeois Philanthropy and Revolutionary Social-Democracy" (Russian Edition).



## SOCIAL IMPERIALISTS.

### OPPORTUNISTS AND THE IMPERIALIST WAR.

In every capitalist country, the imperialist war has brought to light a sore of long-standing : the alliance of the majority of parliamentary and trade union leaders on the side of the bourgeoisie. Under the false motto of "national safety," they in reality were concerned for the safety of the predatory interests of one of the two groups of the world pirates—either the Anglo-American-French or German. They entered into alliance with the bourgeoisie against the proletarian revolutionary struggle. They concealed this treachery by sentimental, petty bourgeois, reformist and pacifist phrases, about peaceful revolution, constitutional methods, democracy, etc. This was the case in all countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that it happened in England.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. xvii, p. 207 (Russian Edition).

### OPPORTUNISTS-IMPERIALISTS.

The fight on principles within the B.S.P. (British Socialist Party) was a very serious one. The old Executive was headed by one of the founders of the Party, Hyndman. For several years already, he has been acting independently, completely ignoring the party and even went against the party on the question of armaments and war. Hyndman took it into his head that England was being threatened by defeat and enslavement by Germany, and, therefore, Socialists should support the demand for an "adequate" (that is, a strong) fleet for the protection of England.



Socialists in the role of advocates of a "strong fleet!" and this in a country which is helping to enslave and plunder in the most unashamed feudal fashion 300,000,000 of the population of India and scores of millions in Egypt and in other colonies.

Of course, the British bourgeoisie (Conservatives and Liberals) liked this phantasy of Hyndman's. Naturally also the British Social-Democrats—to their honour be it said—could not reconcile themselves with this shameful state of affairs and strenuously fought him.

The fight was prolonged and stubborn; attempts were made at compromise, but Hyndman was incorrigible. To the credit of British Socialism, at the congress referred to, Hyndman was compelled to resign from the Executive, and the composition of the Executive as a whole underwent a 75 per cent. change.

The British Social-Democrats would have lost the right to combat the opportunistic so-called "independent" (of Socialism, but dependent on Liberalism) Labour Party if it had not revolted against the nationalistic sins of its Executive.

Let the bourgeois press get what satisfaction it may out of the internal conflicts among the Social-Democrats. The Social-Democrats do not regard themselves as saints. They know that frequently the proletariat becomes infected with some vile disease through its bourgeois environment. This is inevitable in filthy and loathsome capitalist society. But the Social-Democrats have had to heal their party by frank and fearless criticism, and they will certainly heal their party in England also.

"Pravda," No. 109 (303), May, 14th, 1913. From an article: "The Congress of the British Socialist Party."

#### OPPORTUNISTS AND THE IRISH REBELLION.

In the last number of the *Socialist Review* (Sept. 1916), the organ of the opportunist Independent Labour Party contains on page 287 the resolution of the Newcastle Conference of that Party, stating that the Party refused to support any war conducted by any government even if "nominally" that war was a war of "defence." On page 205, however, we read the following declaration by the editors:

"We do not approve of the revolt of the Sinn Feiners. (The Irish Rebellion in 1916). We do not approve of any armed revolt as we do not approve of any form of militarism and war."

Is there any need to prove that these "anti-militarists," like the advocates of disarmament not in small but in large States, are the worst kind of opportunists? Theoretically they are right when they regard armed rebellion also as "one of the forms" of militarism and war.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xiii. (Russian Edition), p. 458. Article "The Slogan of Disarmament."



## WAR AND THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN THE COLONIES.

### THE REVOLT OF THE COLONIES.

**T**HE war marked an epoch of crises for the Western European nations and for imperialism as a whole. Every crisis casts aside the conventional, and breaks through superficialities, sweeps away the obsolete and reveals the more profound springs and forces. What did it reveal from the point of view of the movement of oppressed nationalities? In the colonies we have a number of attempts at revolt which, of course, the oppressing nation with the aid of its military censorship endeavours to conceal. Nevertheless, it is no secret that the British savagely suppressed the mutiny of its Indian troops in Singapore; that there were attempts at rebellion in French Annam (see "Nasha Slovo"\*) and in the German Cameroons (see the pamphlet by Junius†); that in Europe we had on the one hand the rebellion in Ireland which the "freedom loving" British who failed to induce the Irish to accept compulsory military service, suppressed by means of executions and shootings, and on the other hand the Austrian Government which condemned to death a member of the Czech Diet for "treason" and for the same "crime" shot down entire Czech regiments.

Of course, this list is far from complete. Nevertheless it shows that the spark of national revolts has flashed out, both in the colonies and in Europe

\* "Nasha Slovo" was published in Paris during the war by the Trotsky Group.

† Junius: Rosa Luxemburg's pseudonym.

as a result of the crisis in imperialism, and that national sympathies and hatreds have revealed themselves in spite of the drastic measures and threats employed. And yet the crisis of imperialism is far from having reached its climax: the power of the imperialist bourgeoisie has not yet been undermined (a "war of attrition" may do that, but it has not yet done so). The proletarian movement in the imperialist countries is still very weak. What will happen when the war will have led to complete exhaustion, or to the position, when, at least, in one country the power of the bourgeoisie may be undermined by the blows of the proletarian struggles, as was the case with the power of Czarism in 1905?

### OPPORTUNISTS OPPOSED TO NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS.

In the "Berner Tagewacht," the organ of the Zimmerwaldists\* including certain of the lefts, of May 9th, 1916, there was an article dealing with the Irish rebellion signed with the initials K.P., under the heading "Their Song is Sung." In this article, the Irish rebellion is regarded as nothing more nor less than a "putsch" for, it is argued, "the Irish question has been an agrarian question"; peasants were pacified by reform. The present nationalist movement is "purely a movement of the urban petty-bourgeoisie, which, in spite of the great noise it made, was of not much consequence socially." It is not surprising that this estima-

\* Zimmerwaldists: In 1915 an international conference took place in the town of Zimmerwald in Switzerland, of socialist internationalists, the left-wing of which was led by Lenin and Zinoviev.



tion astonishing for its doctrinaire and pedantic character, completely coincided with the Russian national-liberal cadet A. Kulisher,\* who in "Retch" of April 15th, 1916, also described the rebellion as the "Dublin Putsch."

A "putsch" in the scientific sense of the word may be used when the rebellion is nothing more than the attempt of a group of plotters or maniacs receiving no sympathy among the masses. The Irish national movement, however, has a long history, and has passed through various stages and combinations of class interest. It found its expression in the mass Irish National Congress in America (*Vorwaerts*, 20/11/16) which demanded the independence of Ireland, and in the street fighting conducted partly by the urban petty bourgeoisie and partly by the workers after considerable mass agitations, demonstrations, suppressions of newspapers, etc. Whoever describes this rebellion as a "putsch" is either the worst kind of reactionary or so doctrinaire as to be hopelessly incapable of imagining a social revolution as a living phenomenon.

#### THE ROLE OF COLONIAL AND OPPRESSED NATIONALITIES IN THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION.

To believe that a social revolution is possible without the revolt of the small nationalities and colonies in Europe, without the revolutionary outburst of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the non-class conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against land-

\* An ex-professor in the Leningrad University. A right-wing Liberal.

lord, clerical, monarchist, national, etc. oppression—to believe this is tantamount to denying the social revolution altogether. In the imagination of such people in one place will be lined up troops who will say: "We are for Socialism" and in another place the troops will be lined up who will say: "We are for imperialism," and this will be social revolution. Only from such a pedantic point of view is it possible to hurl the epithet of "putsch" against the Irish rebellion.

Those who wait for a "pure" social revolution will never live to see it. Such a one is merely a revolutionary in words, without understanding the reality of revolution.

The Socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything else but an outburst of mass struggles of all malcontents. A section of the petty bourgeoisie and the backward workers will inevitably take part in it—without their participation mass fighting is impossible. No kind of revolution will be possible and inevitably these will bring with them into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary phantasies, their weaknesses and their mistakes. Objectively, however, they will attack capital, and the class-conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat, expressing this objectively, truly heterogeneous, motley and superficially disunited mass struggle, will be able to unite it and direct it to conquer power, seize the banks, to expropriate the trusts which are hated by all (although for various reasons) and carry out other dictatorial measures resulting in their entirety in the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the victory of Socialism which will by no means immediately "purge itself of its petty bourgeois dross."



Is it not clear that in this connection it is least of all permissible to contrast Europe with the colonies. The fight of the oppressed nations in Europe may lead to rebellion and street fighting, to the breakdown of the iron discipline of the army, to martial law. This struggle will cause the revolutionary crisis in Europe to become immeasurably more acute than any far more serious revolt in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the power of the British imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal force delivered in Asia or in Africa. The dialectics of history is such that small nations, impotent as independent factors in the struggle against imperialism, act as a ferment, as one of the bacilli helping to bring to the surface the real forces against imperialism, namely, the Socialist proletariat.

#### THE LESSONS OF THE REBELLION.

The misfortune of the Irish was that their rebellion was premature. The revolt of the European proletariat has not yet matured. Capitalism is not so harmoniously constructed that various sources of rebellion can automatically be merged all at once into one without failures and defeats. On the contrary, the differences in time, in character, and in place of rebellions promise expansion and profundity to the general movements; only in the experience of revolutionary movements, of premature, isolated, scattered and consequently unsuccessful movements do the masses acquire experience, gather strength, discover their real leaders—the Socialist proletariat—and in this way prepare for the general attack in the same way as disjoined

strikes, demonstrations—local and national—outbreaks in the army and revolts among the peasantry, etc., prepared for the general attack in 1905.

Lenin: Collected Works (Russian Edition), vol. xiii, p. 429. Article "A Summary of the Discussion on Self-Determination."

#### THE CAUSES OF SOCIAL IMPERIALISM.

The monopoly profits which the capitalists in one of many countries receive, makes it economically possible for them to bribe a section of the workers, sometimes a considerable minority of them, and win them over against all the rest to the side of the capitalists engaged in the given industry or in the given country. The increasing antagonism among the imperialist nations over the division of the world, intensifies this striving to bribe a section of the workers. In this way the connection is established between imperialism and opportunism, which, as has been stated before, was established in England, and as a consequence of which certain imperialistic features of development were observed in England prior to any other country.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xiii, p. 334.



## REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND WAR.

### THE TASK OF REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN THE IMPERIALIST WAR.

ENGELS distinguishes between the "bourgeois Labour Party" of the *old* trade unionists, the privileged minority, and the "rank and file," the real majority, and appeals to it as *not* having been infected by "bourgeois respectability." This is the essence of Marxist tactics.

We cannot, and no one can, calculate precisely what section of the proletariat follows and will follow the social patriots and opportunists. Only the struggle, only the Socialist revolution, can finally reveal this. But we know for certainty that the advocates of "national defence" during imperialist wars *represent* only the minority. Our duty, therefore, if we desire to remain Socialist, is to *devote below*, to the real masses. This is the entire significance of this fight against opportunism and the whole content of this struggle. In exposing the fact that the opportunists and social patriots really betray and sell the interests of the masses that they champion the temporary privileges of the minority of the workers, that they act as the bearers of bourgeois ideas and influences, and that they are, in fact, the allies and the agents of the bourgeoisie, we teach the masses to recognise their real political interests, to fight for Socialism and for the revolution throughout the long and tortuous period of imperialist wars and imperialist armistices.

The only Marxist line of action in the labour movement of the world is to explain to the masses the inevitability and the necessity for breaking with opportunism, to train them for the revolutionary and ruthless struggle against them, to study the experience of the war in order to expose all the loathsomeness of national Liberal-Labour politics, and not to conceal them.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. xiii., pp. 468-482. Article "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism."

The parting of the ways of "leaders" and "masses" was manifested with peculiar clarity and sharpness in all countries at the end of and after the imperialist war. The principal cause of this phenomenon was many times explained by Marx and Engels in 1852-92 by the example of England. The dominant position of England created in the "masses" a Labour aristocracy, petty bourgeois and opportunist. The leaders of this Labour aristocracy constantly deserted to the bourgeoisie, and were directly or indirectly in its pay. Marx, to his honour, roused the hatred of these wretches by openly branding them as traitors. The newest (20th century) imperialism has created a monopolist privileged position for a few advanced countries, and this brought to the surface everywhere in the Second International a certain type of leader-traitors, opportunists, social-chauvinists, who look after the interests of their particular group in the Labour aristocracy. This caused the opportunist parties to break away from the "masses," that is, from the greatest mass of the toilers, from the majority of the working class, from the lowest paid workers.



The victory of the working class is impossible unless this evil is fought, unless the opportunist, social-traitor-leaders are exposed, disgraced and expelled. The Third International pursues this policy.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. xvii., p. 13 (Russian Edition.) From "Left-Wing Communism."



### SECTION III.

## THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN GREAT BRITAIN AFTER THE WAR

### INTRODUCTION.

**L**ENIN'S writings on the British working class movement after the war are best of all known in this country, and require no detailed introduction. His speeches have not been widely circulated in print, however, and are an indispensable supplement.

The British workers have just witnessed the rise and fall of the MacDonald Government. Lenin will help them to realise that its *Parliamentary* rise and fall are of little consequence. What is of importance was MacDonald's *moral* rise—on the high tide of loyalty, devotion and trustful confidence of the British working class—and fall in his refusal to take advantage of the opportunity and to rally the workers in a smashing attack on the capitalist empire, the capitalist State, and the economic structure of capitalism itself.

Millions of British workers have begun to think politically as the result of MacDonald's brief period of office. Thousands of active workers have begun to lose their illusions about the possibility of the capitalists peacefully handing over real power to the workers, and about the honesty and value of the Labour Party leaders who preach "peace with the capitalists and war on the Communists. Lenin helps them to realise the intimate connection between the capitalists and their agents in the



workers' ranks. Lenin shows them that there is only one place for *real* "left-wingers," *i.e.*, left-wingers who want to fight for the workers, and fight to the best advantage. That place is waiting for them—in the ranks of the Communist Party.

Some Communists, disheartened by the fact that the workers have still not outlived many illusions, from time to time display a tendency to shut their eyes to facts about the Labour Party. Other Communists—more, perhaps—putting all their heart and soul into the successful application of Lenin's tactics, tend to forget that the best tactics turn into opportunism when they are allowed to obscure the final aim. For these Communists as for those it will be worth their while studying and digging deep into and chewing well what Lenin wrote in 1920.



## THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

**O**UR advance almost up to the gates of Warsaw\* served as a powerful stimulus to the revolutionary movement in Europe, particularly in England. Although we failed to reach the industrial proletariat of Poland (and this is one of the main causes of our defeat) which is beyond the Vistula and in Warsaw, we nevertheless reached the British proletariat and raised its movement to hitherto unparalleled heights, to a completely new stage of the revolution. When the British government handed us its ultimatum it became clear that it had first to consult the opinion of the British workers before it could act, and these workers, nine-tenths of whose leaders are Mensheviks of the worst type, responded by forming a Council of Action.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF ACTION.

The British press was scared and began to howl that this was "dual government." And it was right. England proved to be in the same state of political relations as that which existed in Russia after the revolution of February, 1917, when the Soviets were obliged to control every act of the bourgeois government. The Council of Action is the organisation of all workers, irrespective of Party, similar to our VTSIK (All-Russian Central Executive Committee) at the time when Gots, Danf and the others were in control of it. It is an

\* During the war with Poland in 1920.  
+ Leaders of the Russian opportunist parties, the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Menshevik Party.



organisation in competition with the government in which the Mensheviks are compelled to act partly like Bolsheviks, and like our Mensheviks finally got hopelessly mixed up and thus helped to swing the masses to our side. So the Mensheviks in the Council of Action were compelled by the inexorable march of events to help on the British workers towards the Bolshevik Revolution. People declare that the British Mensheviks already regard themselves as the government and are preparing to take the place of the bourgeoisie in the near future. This will be a further stage in the general progress of the British proletarian Revolution.

This mighty swing in the British Labour Movement will have the most powerful effect upon the world Labour movement.

Lenin : Extract from a speech delivered at the All-Russian Conference of the Russian Communist Party. Collected Works, vol. xvii., p. 309 (Russian Edition).



## THE COLONIAL QUESTION IN THE REVOLUTION.

The toiling masses in colonial and semi-colonial countries, representing the majority of the inhabitants of the globe, were aroused to political life already in the beginning of the 20th century, particularly by the revolutions in Russia, Turkey, Persia and China. The imperialist war of 1914-18, and the establishment of the Soviet Government in Russia finally converted these masses into an active factor of world politics and of the revolutionary destruction of Imperialism, although the obstinate educated middle class of Europe including the leaders of the Second and Two and a Half Internationals failed to see this. British India stands foremost amongst these countries and the revolution is rapidly approaching maturity in proportion as the industrial proletariat and railway workers play an important role in it on the one hand, and with the brutalisation of the reign of terror introduced by the British, who more and more frequently resort to mass murders (Amritsar) and public whippings.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. 19, p. 313 (Russian Edition).

## THE THIRD AND THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL ON THE COLONIAL QUESTION.

I want to touch upon the significance of the revolutionary work of the Communist Parties not only in their own countries, but also among the troops which the exploiting nations employ in order to keep the populations in their colonies in subjection.



Comrade Quelch, of the British Socialist Party spoke about this on our Commission. He stated that the British rank and file worker would regard it as treason to help the enslaved peoples in their revolt against British domination. It is true that the jingo and patriotic sentiments of the Labour aristocracy in Britain and America represent a great danger to Socialism acting as a powerful support to the Second International. It is true that this is a case of extreme treachery on the part of the leaders and workers belonging to the bourgeois International. The Second International also discussed the colonial question, the Basle Manifesto referred to this quite clearly. The parties of the Second International promised to act in a revolutionary manner, but we do not notice that the parties of the Second International conduct any real revolutionary work or render assistance to the exploited and oppressed nations in their revolt against their oppressors, and the same thing I presume, must be said of the majority of parties who are leaving the Second International and desire to affiliate to the Third International. We must declare this from the housetops, for there is no denying this. We will see whether any attempt will be made to refute this.

Lenin: Collected Works, vol. 17, p. 278 (Russian Edition).  
Speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern.

## QUESTION OF THE FORMATION AND OF THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Sincere supporters of the emancipation of the workers from the yoke of capitalism cannot under any circumstances be opposed to the formation of a Communist Party which alone is able to train the masses of the workers, on other than bourgeois or petty bourgeois lines, and which alone is capable of really exposing, ridiculing and shaming the "leaders" who are capable of doubting that England is helping Poland.\* But the people who continue to remain the intellectual captives of the bourgeoisie, who continue to retain middle class prejudices about "democracy" (bourgeois democracy) pacifism, etc., of course would do even more harm to the proletariat if any desired to call themselves Communists and affiliate to the Third International. Such people are incapable of anything except passing honeyed "resolutions" against intervention drafted entirely in petty bourgeoisie phrases. In a way these resolutions are also useful in that the old "leaders" (the adherents to bourgeois democracy, peaceful peoples, etc., etc.), make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of the masses, and the more empty resolutions they pass which bind no one and are unaccompanied by revolutionary action, the sooner will they expose themselves. Let each act according to his own way. Let the Communists work directly through their Party towards awakening the revolutionary consciousness of the workers. Let those who sup-

\* Lenin: A letter to the British Workers, "Pravda," June 17th, 1920, No. 130.



ported "national defence" during the Imperialist War for the partition of the world, who supported the "defence" of the secret treaties between the British capitalists and the Czar for the plunder of Turkey, let those who "do not see" that England is assisting Poland and the Russian White Guards, let them as quickly as possible multiply the number of their "peaceful resolutions" to the point of absurdity; the sooner they do that, the sooner will they meet the fate of Kerensky, of the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in Russia.

Comrades. I wish to make a few remarks on the speeches of Comrades Tanner and MacLaine.

#### WHAT IS THE POLITICAL PARTY OF THE PROLETARIAT?

Comrade Tanner said that he is in accord with the dictatorship of the proletariat; but that, however, he understands that something quite different from our conception. He says that we understand by the dictatorship of the proletariat essentially the dictatorship of a resolute and conscious minority. But actually, under capitalism, where the masses of the workers are constantly exploited, and are unable to develop their human faculties, the chief characteristic of every political party is that it necessarily comprises just the minority of its class. And just as in every capitalist country class conscious workers are in a minority, the political party unites only the truly class conscious minority of all the workers. We are, therefore, compelled to take it for granted that the great masses of the workers are to be led and guided by the conscious minority. When Comrade Tanner asserts that he

is opposed to a party organisation, but at the same time, advocates that the proletariat, as a whole, should be under the leadership of the most resolute and class conscious part of it, then I must declare that in reality there is no difference between us. What is that organised minority? If this minority is really class conscious, if it is able to lead the masses, and is capable of solving every question which arises in our daily work, then it actually is a party. Comrades, such as Tanner, are of particular importance to us, since they represent the mass movement, and form an integral part of the minority which is to fight resolutely for the dictatorship of the proletariat and educate the masses. Such a minority, in reality constitutes a party. Comrade Tanner has said that this minority should be organised and lead the entire working class. If the Comrade Tanner and all the other comrades of the Shop Steward movement, and of the I.W.W. recognise—and, in conversation with them every day, we see that they actually do recognise—that the conscious minority of the working class alone can lead the proletariat, they should then, perforce, agree that this is the essence of our resolutions. The only difference between us is the question of avoiding the use of the word "party," because of the prejudice against a political party prevailing in the minds of British comrades. They probably think that a political party, must of necessity, resemble that of Gompers and Henderson, or consist of parliamentary careerists and traitors to the working class. If, by parliamentarism, they understand the present-day British and American parliamentarism, then we are likewise opposed to it. We want new parties—different parties that are in close touch with the masses and understand how to lead them.



## THE QUESTION OF AFFILIATION TO THE LABOUR PARTY.

I now come to the question dealing with the affiliation of the British Communist Party to the Labour Party. The decision to remain within the ranks of the Labour Party is the only correct solution. Now Comrade McLaine tells us "not to be too dogmatic." This expression in my opinion is quite out of place here. Ramsay says—"Let the British Communists decide the question for themselves." What kind of an International would it be, if a small part of it should be allowed to come and declare—"Some of us are for and some against; let us decide the question ourselves"? What need would there be then for an International? Why then hold a Congress, or carry on discussion?

What McLaine has said with reference to the political parties, concerns the Trade Unions and Parliamentarism as well. It is, however, absolutely true that the vast majority of the best revolutionists are against affiliation to the Labour Party, because they do not accept parliamentarism even as a weapon in our struggle.

## CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION TO THE LABOUR PARTY.

I shall now deal with some arguments put forward by Comrade McLaine concerning the British Labour Party. We must speak quite openly: the Communist Party may affiliate to the Labour Party only on condition that it retains entire freedom to criticise that party and to conduct its own political propaganda. This is a condition of the utmost

importance. But, in the Labour Party, we have a case of co-operation between the advanced minority and the great mass of the British workers. All the workers, all the members of the Trade Unions, are members of the Labour Party. The Labour Party is a peculiar organisation, having no parallel in any other country; it comprises from six to seven million\* organised workers of all kinds of unions. Political convictions are not inquired into. The British Socialist Party can freely brand Henderson as a traitor, and nevertheless, remains a member of the Labour Party. That means the collaboration of the vanguard of the working class with the rearguard. It is a matter of utmost importance for the entire movement that we insist on the British Communists forming a link between the Party; that is, the minority of the working class and all backward sections of the workers. Should the minority be unable to lead the masses and incapable of getting into close touch with them, then it is no party, or National Committee, or Shop Stewards. As far as I know, the Shop Stewards in England have their National Committee and central guiding organ, which is already a step towards the formation of a party. Therefore, since it cannot be denied that the British Labour Party is composed of workers, it is clear that working in that party means co-operation of the vanguard of the working class with the less advanced workers; and where this co-operation is not systematically carried on, the Communist Party is worthless, and there can be no question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But Comrades Tanner and Ramsay object that

\* Membership in 1920.



the majority of the British Communists are not going to agree to affiliation. Must we in all cases follow the majority? Of course not. If it is not yet clear what are the correct tactics, then perhaps it would be better to wait. We must study the question raised by the British delegation in a special committee, and then reach the conclusion that affiliation is the proper tactics. If the majority is opposed to it, we must organise the minority separately. This will be of educational significance. We must not follow the bad example of the Second International and declare that these questions concern England alone. We must express our opinion openly.

Lenin : Collected Works, vol. xvii., pp. 270-273 (Russian Edition). Speech at the Second Congress of the Comintern, 1920.

### CONTACT WITH THE MASSES.

We have pointed out in all our resolutions that we can only recognise a party, especially a workers' party, if it is really allied to the masses against the old leaders who are rotten through and through, as well as against the chauvinists of the right, and against all those who occupy a middle position. We have said that more than a dozen times in all our resolutions, and it means simply that we demand an alteration of the old party in the sense of closer contact with the masses.

Is it possible for a Communist Party to join another political party which still belongs to the Second International? We must remember that conditions in the British L.P. are very peculiar: this is a very unusual party, it is not a party in the ordinary sense of the word; it consists of the

members of all the trade union organisations. It grants sufficient liberty to all political parties which affiliate to it. Therefore, we have in this party the great mass of the British workers, led by bourgeois elements, by the social patriots, worse even than Scheidemann and Noske, and similar gentlemen. The L.P. admits, however, that the B.S.P., which is one of its members, should have its own organs, where members of the same Labour Party openly declare the leaders to be social traitors.

This means, therefore, that a party belonging to the L.P. is not only in a position to criticise sharply, but also to declare openly, whilst giving names, that the old leaders are social traitors. These are very peculiar conditions; a party organises enormous masses of workers, as if it were a political party, and at the same time is compelled to grant them full liberty. Comrade McLaine has pointed out that for example, at the Labour Party Congress, these Scheidemanns were compelled by the B.S.P. to discuss openly the question of affiliation to the Third International, and that all its organisations and all its local sections were obliged to discuss it. Under these circumstances it would be wrong tactics not to join the party.

### POSSIBILITY OF EXPULSION FROM THE LABOUR PARTY.

Privately, Comrade Sylvia Pankhurst said to me: if we really are revolutionaries, and if we try to join the L.P., these gentlemen will exclude us. Now, this would not be at all a bad thing. In our resolution it is stated that we are for the affiliation in as much as the L.P. grants *sufficient liberty* for



*criticism.* This point we pursue to the very end. Comrade McLaine has pointed out that such peculiar conditions prevail now in England, that a political party which really desires to be and can be a revolutionary workers' party, nevertheless can be united with this strange workers' organisation of four millions of workers, of partly trade union and partly political nature, under the guidance of the bourgeoisie. Under these circumstances, it would be the greatest mistake for the best revolutionary elements not to do all in their power in order to remain in this party. Let Thomas and the other social traitors, who are being treated as such, exclude them. This will have an excellent influence on the British working masses.

#### PECULIARITIES OF BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT.

The comrades point out that the Labour aristocracy in England is stronger than anywhere else. This is correct. Its traditions may be counted by centuries and not by decades. The bourgeoisie in England, which has had much more political experience—and democratic experience, too—knew how to bribe the workers, and how to create a big class—bigger than in the other countries, yet small as compared to the great masses of the workers—of workers' leaders, permeated throughout by bourgeois prejudices with an absolutely bourgeois reformist policy. We see in Ireland, 200,000 British soldiers oppressing the Irish by means of the worst imaginable terror. No revolutionary propaganda is being carried on among these soldiers by the British Socialists. But we clearly state in our resolutions that only those British parties can be accepted into the Third International, which will carry on great revolutionary propaganda among

the British workers and soldiers. I insist—it has not been refuted, either here or in the commission—upon our demanding it. The British Communist Party should keep sufficient freedom to denounce and criticise the treacherous leaders, who are much stronger in England than in the other countries.

#### REVOLUTIONARY ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

All the best revolutionary elements of the working class who are dissatisfied with the slow process of development—which in England would perhaps be still slower than in other countries—will come over to our side. The slowness of the development is due to the fact that the British bourgeoisie is able to provide relatively better conditions for the Labour aristocracy and thus retard the progress of the revolution. For that reason the British comrades must not only strive to make the masses more revolutionary, but at the same time they must strive to establish a real political party of the working class. Excellent proletarian organisations like the Shop Stewards Committee have to this day failed to affiliate to a political party. If you organise yourselves into a political party, you will see that our tactics are based on a correct conception of the political development of the last decade and that a real political party can be established only when it absorbs the best elements of the revolutionary class, and utilises every opportunity for the struggle against the reactionary leaders wherever they are to be found.

If the British Communist Party begins to act revolutionary in the L.P., and if Messrs. Henderson are compelled to exclude this party, this will mean a very great victory of the revolutionary and Communist working class movement in England.



## COMMUNIST PARTY TACTICS.

Hatred of the representative of oppressed and exploited masses, is, indeed, "the beginning of all wisdom"; it is the basis of every Socialist and Communist movement and of its success. Politics is a science and an art which does not drop from the skies, and which cannot be obtained for nothing; and the proletariat, if it wishes to overcome the bourgeoisie, must create for itself its own, proletarian, "class politicians," as capable as bourgeois politicians.

Not Parliament but Workers' Councils will be the way by which the proletariat will achieve its end; of course, those who have not yet understood that are the most vicious reactionaries, even though they be the most learned men, the most erudite Marxists, the most honest citizens and fathers of families. The author of the letter\* does not, however even think of putting the question as to whether not it is possible for the Soviets to vanquish Parliament without introducing "Soviet" workers into the latter, without preparing inside Parliament the success of Soviets in the impending struggle for the dispersion of Parliaments. At the same time, however, the author of the letter expresses the thoroughly correct idea that the Communist Party in England must act upon a scientific basis. Science demands, in the first place, an evaluation of the experience of other countries, especially if those others are undergoing or have recently undergone, a very similar experience; in the second place, it demands an evaluation of all forces,

\* The letter referred to is W. Gallacher's which appeared in "The Workers' Dreadnought," No. 48, 1920.

groups, parties, classes, masses, acting within the given country, and the determination of one's policy not merely according to the strength of the desires and views of one group or party, according to its degree of class consciousness and preparedness for the struggle.

## THE POSSIBILITY OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT AND ITS TACTICS.

*That the Hendersons, Clynes, MacDonalds and Snowden are hopelessly reactionary is true. It is also true that they want to take the power into their own hands (preferring, however, a coalition with the bourgeoisie), that they want to govern according to the same old rules of the bourgeoisie, and that they will inevitably behave when in power, like the Scheidemanns and Noskes. All this is true, but it does not necessarily follow that to support them means treason to the revolution; on the contrary, in the interests of the revolution, the revolutionaries of the working class must give these gentlemen certain parliamentary support.*

## BRITISH BOURGEOISIE AND REVOLUTION.

To make this thought clearer, I shall take the speech of Lloyd George, on March 18th, 1920, as published in the *Manchester Guardian*, of the following day.

Lloyd George, sought to prove that a coalition of the Liberals with the Conservatives, and a close one at that, was necessary, otherwise victory would be on the side of the Labour Party, which Lloyd George prefers to call "Socialist," and which



strives towards collective ownership of the means of production. "In France it was known as Communism," the leader of the British bourgeoisie explained to his hearers (members of the Liberal Party who probably up to that time had been unaware of it). "In Germany it was known as Socialism, and in Russia it is known as Bolshevism." For the Liberals, explained Lloyd George, this is unacceptable on principle, as the Liberals on principle are for private property. "Civilisation is in jeopardy," declared the orator, and, therefore, the Liberals and Conservatives must unite.

"If you go to the agricultural areas," said Lloyd George, "I agree that you have the old party divisions as strong as ever; they are far removed from the danger. The danger is not there but it is very big in some industrial centres. Four-fifths of our country is occupied industrially and commercially: only one-fifth is under agriculture. It is one of the things I have constantly in mind when I think of the dangers which threaten our future. In France, the population is agricultural, and you have a solid body of opinion which does not change very rapidly, and which is not easily excited by revolutionary movements. Such is not the case here. This country is more top-heavy than any country in the world, and if it begins to rock, the crash here, for that reason, will be greater than in any other land."

The reader sees from this that Mr. Lloyd George is not only a very clever man, but that he has learned much from the Marxists. It would be no sin our part to learn something from Mr. Lloyd George.

# THE ROLE OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT. FROM LABOUR GOVERNMENT TO COMMUNISM.

Since the majority of the workers in Britain still support the British Scheidemanns and Keren-skys\* since they have not yet experienced a government composed of such men, an experience necessary in Russia and Germany before there was an exodus of the masses towards Communism, it follows without any doubt that the British Communists must participate in Parliament. They must from *within* Parliament help the workers to see in practice the results of the Henderson and Snowden Government they must help the Hendersons and Snowdens to vanquish Lloyd George and Churchill united. To act otherwise means to hamper the progress of the revolution; because, without an alteration in the views of the majority of the working class, revolution is impossible; and this change can be brought about by the political experience of the masses only, and never through propaganda alone. If an indisputably weak minority of the workers say "Forward, without compromise, without pause or retreat," their slogan is, on the face of it wrong. They know, or at least they should know, that the majority, in the event of Henderson's and Snowden's victory over Lloyd George and Churchill, will, after a short time, be disappointed in its leaders, and will come over to Communism—or at any rate be neutral in their attitude towards the Communists. It is as though ten thousand soldiers were to throw themselves into battle against fifty thousand of the enemy

\* Premier of the Provisional Government in Russia, 1917; opportunist and Socialist, went abroad after October, 1917, Revolution.



at a time when a reinforcement of one hundred thousand men is expected, but is not immediately available; obviously, it is necessary at such a moment to stop, to turn, even to effect a compromise. This no-compromise slogan is intellectual childishness, and not the serious tactics of the revolutionary class.

*The fundamental law of revolution* confirmed by all revolution, and particularly by all three Russian revolutions of the twentieth century, is as follows: *It is not sufficient for the revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses understand the possibility of living in the old way and demand changes; for the revolution it is necessary that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule as of old. Only when the masses do not want the old regime, and when the rulers are unable to govern as of old, then only can the revolution succeed.* This truth may be expressed in other words; revolution is impossible without an all-national crisis, affecting both the exploited and the exploiters. It follows that for the revolution it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least a majority of the conscious, thinking, politically active workers), should fully understand the necessity for a revolution, and be ready to sacrifice their lives for it; second, that the ruling class be in a state of governmental crisis which attracts even the most backward masses to politics. It is a sign of every real revolution, this rapid tenfold or even hundredfold increase in the number of representatives of the toiling and oppressed masses, hitherto apathetic, who are able to carry on a political fight which weakens the government and facilitates its overthrow by the revolutionaries.

In Britain, as is seen specifically from Lloyd George's speech, both conditions for a successful proletarian revolution are obviously developing. If we are not a revolution group, but a party of the revolutionary class, and wish to carry the masses with us (without which we run the risk of remaining empty talkers), we must first help Henderson and Snowden to defeat Lloyd George and Churchill; or, to be more explicit, *we must compel the former to defeat the latter, for the former fear their victory.* Secondly, we must help the majority of the working class to convince themselves, through their own experience, that we are right; that is, they must convince themselves of the utter worthlessness of the Hendersons and Snowdens, of their petty-bourgeois and treacherous natures, of the inevitability of their bankruptcy. Thirdly, we must hasten the moment when, through the disappointment of the majority of the workers with the Hendersons, it will be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the Henderson government—which will most certainly lose its head if the clever leader of, not the petit, but grand bourgeoisie, Lloyd George himself loses his wits so completely and more weakens himself—(and with himself the whole bourgeois party)—yesterday through his "collisions" with Churchill, to-day with his "collisions" with Asquith.

#### THE NECESSITY OF A UNITED PARTY AND ITS TACTICS.

Let me speak more definitely. The British Communists must, in my opinion, unite all their four parties and groups (all of them very weak, some very, very weak) into one single Communist Party,



on the platform of the principles of the Third International, with Parliamentary action *obligatory*. The Communist Party must offer a compromise to the Hendersons and Snowdens, an electoral understanding: "Let us act together against the union of Lloyd George and Churchill; let us divide the seats in Parliament according to the number of votes cast by the workers for the Labour Party, for the Communists" not in the elections, but by a special poll, but let us retain the fullest freedom of agitation, propaganda, and political activity." Without the latter conditions there can, of course, be no bloc, for this would be treason; the British Communists must and will stand up for and maintain the fullest liberty in exposing the Hendersons and Snowdens, as did the Russian Bolsheviks for fifteen years (1903-1917) in relation to the Russian Hendersons and Snowdens, that is the Mensheviks.

If the Hendersons and Snowdens accept the bloc on these conditions, then we are the gainers, for it is altogether immaterial how many seats in Parliament we get. On this point we shall make more concessions so long as the Hendersons, and especially their new friends (or should it be their new masters?) the Liberals, who have gone over to the Independent Labour Party—are keenest on this. We are the gainers, for we shall carry our propaganda into the masses at the very moment when Lloyd George himself has thrown the Labour Party a challenge; and we shall help, not only the Labour Party to form its Government the more speedily, but also the masses the sooner to understand our Communist propaganda, which we shall carry on ceaselessly and unmitigatingly against the Hendersons.

#### REFUSAL OF OPPORTUNISTS TO MAKE AN ELECTORAL BLOC WITH THE COMMUNISTS.

If the Hendersons and Snowdens reject a bloc on these conditions, we shall gain still more. For we have at once thus shown to the masses that the Hendersons prefer their own proximity to the capitalists to the unification of all the workers. In this connection it is to be noticed that even in purely Menshevik circles—*i.e.*, the entirely opportunist Independent Labour Party—the rank and file are for Soviets. We have at once gained in the eyes of the masses; they, after the highly accurate exposure of Lloyd George—highly useful for Communists—will sympathise with the unification of all workers against the coalition of Lloyd George and Churchill. We score again in demonstrating that the Hendersons and Snowdens are afraid to defeat Lloyd George, are afraid to take the power alone, and are striving secretly to gain the support of Lloyd George, who is openly stretching a hand to Churchill against the Labour Party.

Should the Hendersons and Snowdens refuse to form a bloc with the Communists, the latter would have at once gained in the work of obtaining the sympathies of the masses and of discrediting the Hendersons and Snowdens and if, on that account, the Communists should lose a few seats in Parliament, it would not matter very much to them. We would put forward our candidates only in very insignificant numbers, and only in absolutely safe districts, *i.e.*, where our candidate would not help to elect a Liberal against a Labourite. We would carry on an election campaign, spreading literature in favour of Communism, and proposing in all districts where we have no candidates to vote for



the Labourite against the bourgeoisie. Comrades Sylvia Pankhurst and Gallacher are mistaken if they think there is treason to Communism in this, or that it signifies the renunciation of the fight against social traitors. On the contrary, the cause of the Communist revolution could undoubtedly only gain by this.

At present, it is often difficult for the British Communists even to approach the masses, even to make themselves heard. But if I address the masses as a Communist, and invite them to vote for Henderson against Lloyd George, I will most certainly get a hearing. And, being listened to, I should be able to popularise the idea, not only that Soviets are better than Parliaments, and that the dictatorship of the proletariat is better than the dictatorship of Churchill (disguised under the name of bourgeois "democracy"), but also that I am prepared to support Henderson by my vote in just the same way as a rope supports the man who has hanged himself. And, as the Hendersons draw nearer to the formation of their own Government, it will be proved that I am right, it will draw the masses to my side, and will facilitate the political death of the Hendersons and Snowdens, as happened in the case of their co-thinkers in Russia and in Germany.

And if the objection be raised: "These tactics are too cunning and intricate, the masses won't understand them; they scatter and disintegrate our forces they will interfere with concentration on the Soviet revolution, etc.:" "I shall reply to the 'left' critics: 'Don't attribute your doctrinarism to the masses!' It is a matter of fact that the masses in

Russia are not more but less advanced than in England; nevertheless the masses did understand the Bolsheviks, and the latter were helped, not hindered, by the circumstances that, on the eve of the Soviet Revolution, in September, 1917, lists of their candidates for the bourgeois parliament (Constituent Assembly) were being prepared, and that on the *morrow* of the Soviet Revolution, in November, 1917, they were taking part in elections to the very same Constituent Assembly which dispersed on January 5th, 1918.

Lenin: Vol. xvii., p. 165 (Russian Edition).

#### TACTICAL TASKS OF THE C.P.G.B.

The differences between the Churchills and Lloyd Georges (these political types exist in all countries, allowing for trifling national variations) and between the MacDonalds and Lloyd Georges are quite unimportant and shallow from the viewpoint of pure—i.e., of *abstract* Communism, that is, of Communism which has not yet ripened into practical activity of the masses, these differences are exceedingly important. The Communist who wishes to be not only a class conscious convinced propagandist, but a practical leader of the masses in the revolution, must carefully estimate these differences, and determine the moment of the complete maturity of the conflicts which inevitably weaken and debilitate all these "friends"; herein lies his whole task, his whole problem. It is necessary to co-ordinate the strictest devotion to the ideas of Communism with the ability to accept all necessary practical compromises, manœuvrings,



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